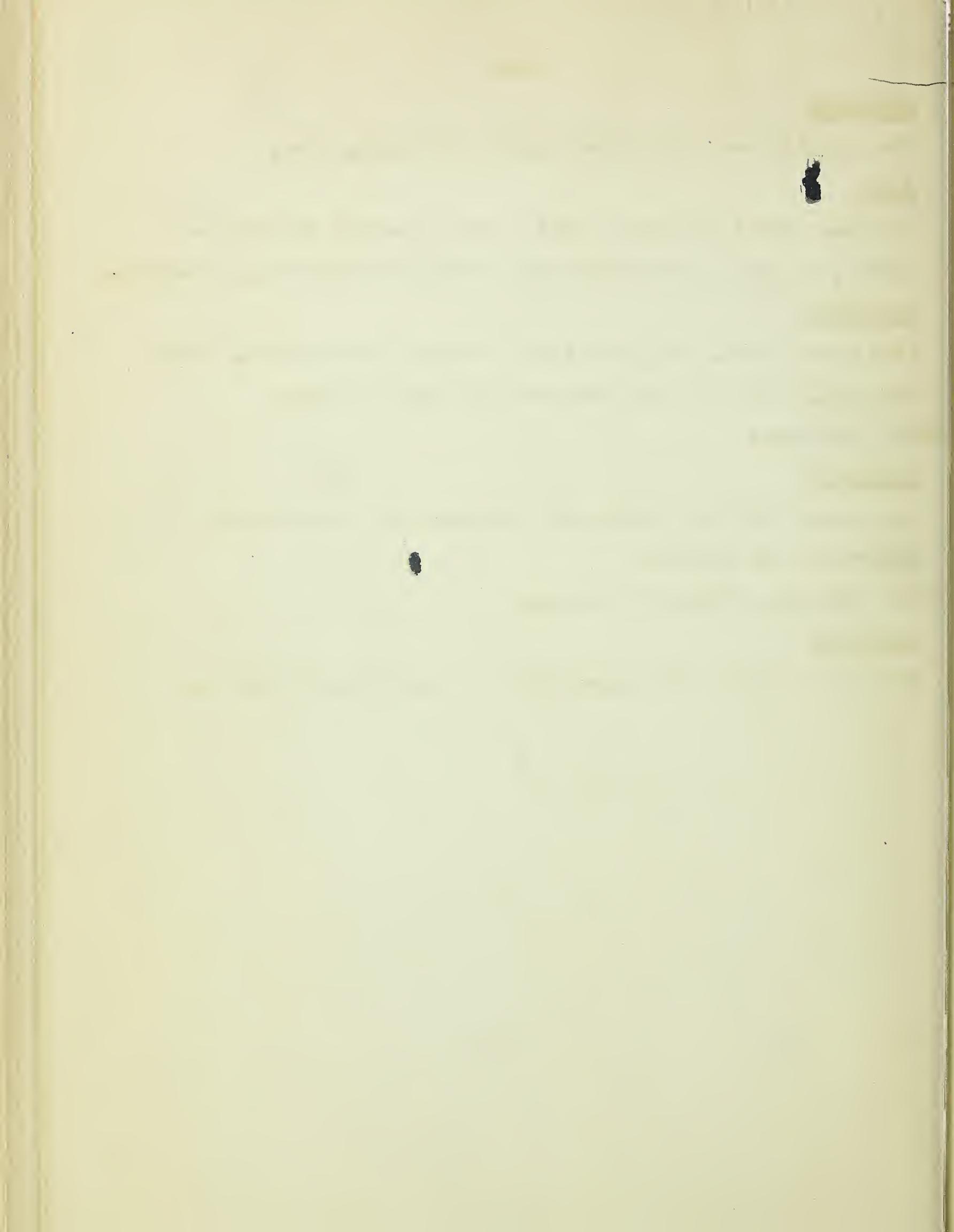


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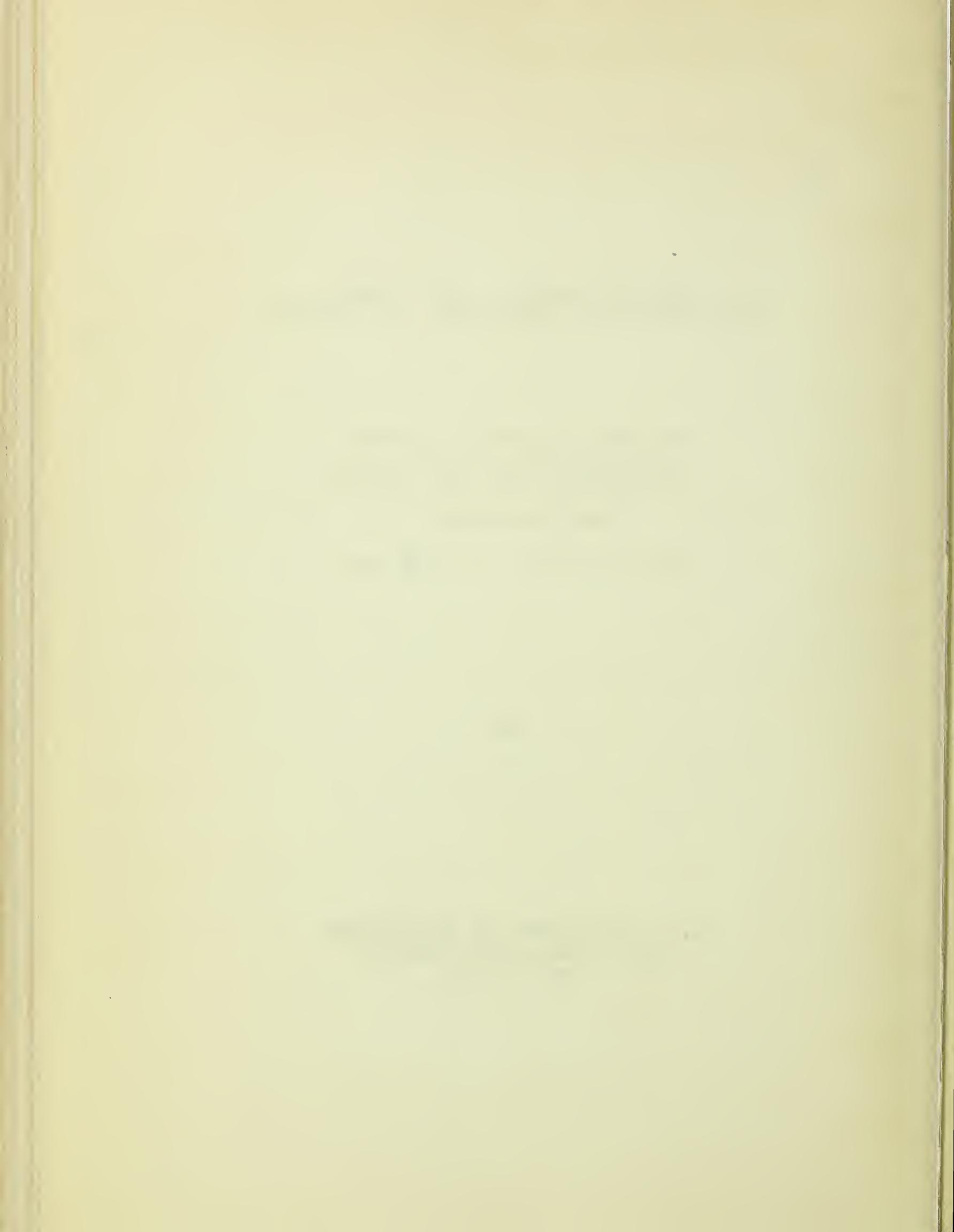
"SHIFTING SANDS: THE PROBLEM.
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS: THE ANSWER."

Broadcast No. 13 in a series
of discussions of soil con-
servation in the Ohio Valley.

(WLW, Cincinnati

July 23, 1933 6 - 6:15 p.m.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE
Dayton, Ohio



SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain...

ANNOUNCER

Fortunes Washed Away!

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

In the days of '49, San Francisco was a sprawling collection of shacks and tents along the water's edge. The westerly part of the city was a long succession of shifting sand dunes--shifting eastward with every breeze. An official survey called it "uninhabitable by man." But today, this desert waste land has been transformed into a world-famous garden--an outstanding example of successful soil conservation and reclamation--Golden Gate Park.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

No desert waste land is the teeming west coast of Michigan, but its important manufacturing and shipping points, its potentially rich agricultural land, are fighting the same threat which once clouded the California horizon. For along the water-warmed fringes of western Michigan are shifting sands--sands that threaten thousands of acres of fertile soil. So, to Berrien County in 1935 came a federal soil erosion control project. Established methods of fruit culture presented many problems to the project manager...

SOUND: Car coming to stop, brakes applied, car door opens and closes.

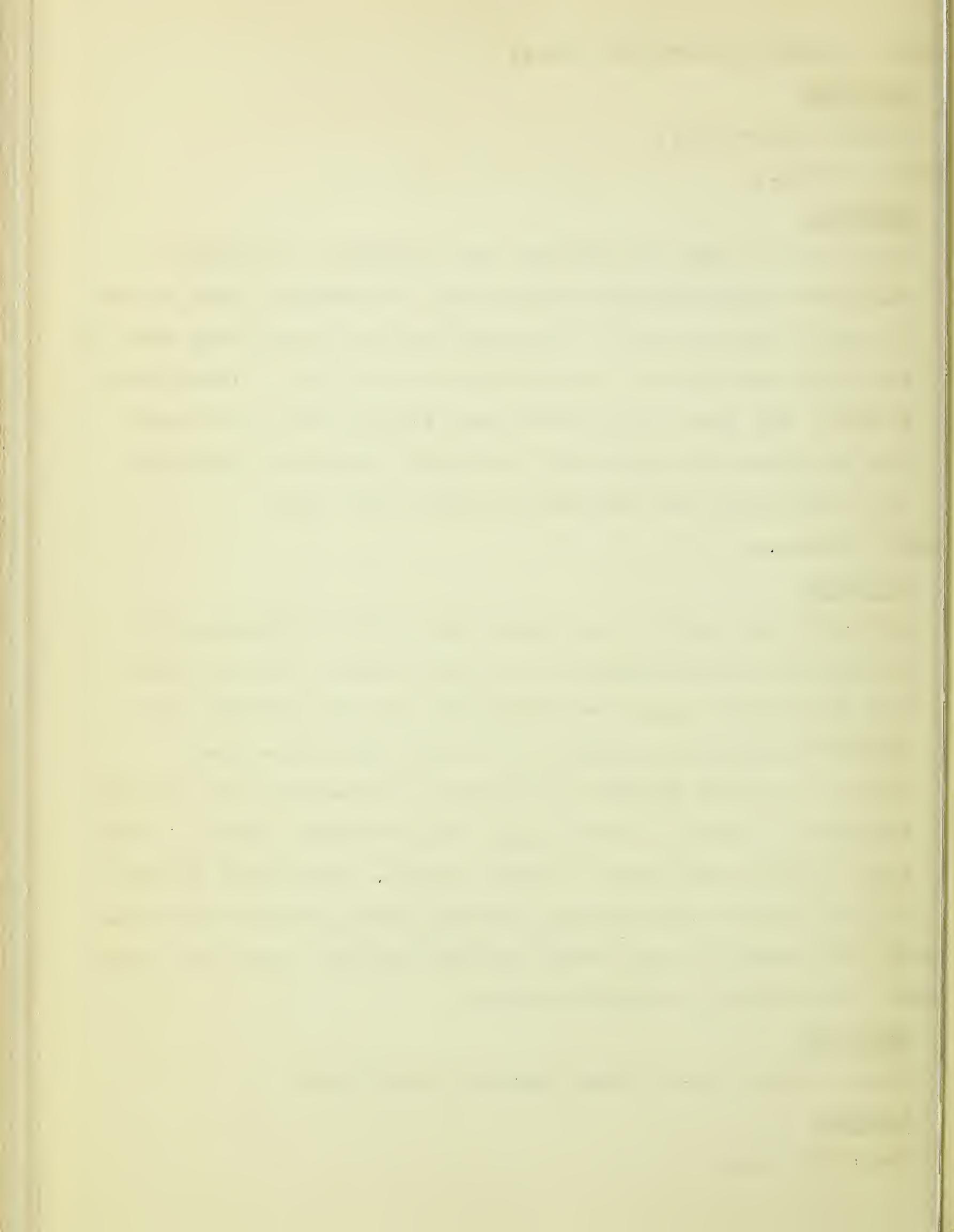
SOUND: Wind blowing, windmill creaking.

SACKRIDER

Howdy, howdy. You're Oliver Lawrence, aren't you?

LAWRENCE

That's the name.



SACKRIDER

My name's Sackrider, Mr. Lawrence. I'm with the soil erosion project that's being started around here.

LAWRENCE

Oh, yes, I've heard about it. Let's get in out of this wind.

SACKRIDER

Not a bad idea.

SOUND: Door opens, wind stops blowing as door closes.

LAWRENCE

Just sit over there, Mr. Sackrider, and make yourself at home, while I fill up this old pipe.

SACKRIDER

Guess I'll do the same. Have some tobacco?

LAWRENCE

No, thanks. I'll use this.

SOUND: Match striking, puffing on pipe.

SACKRIDER

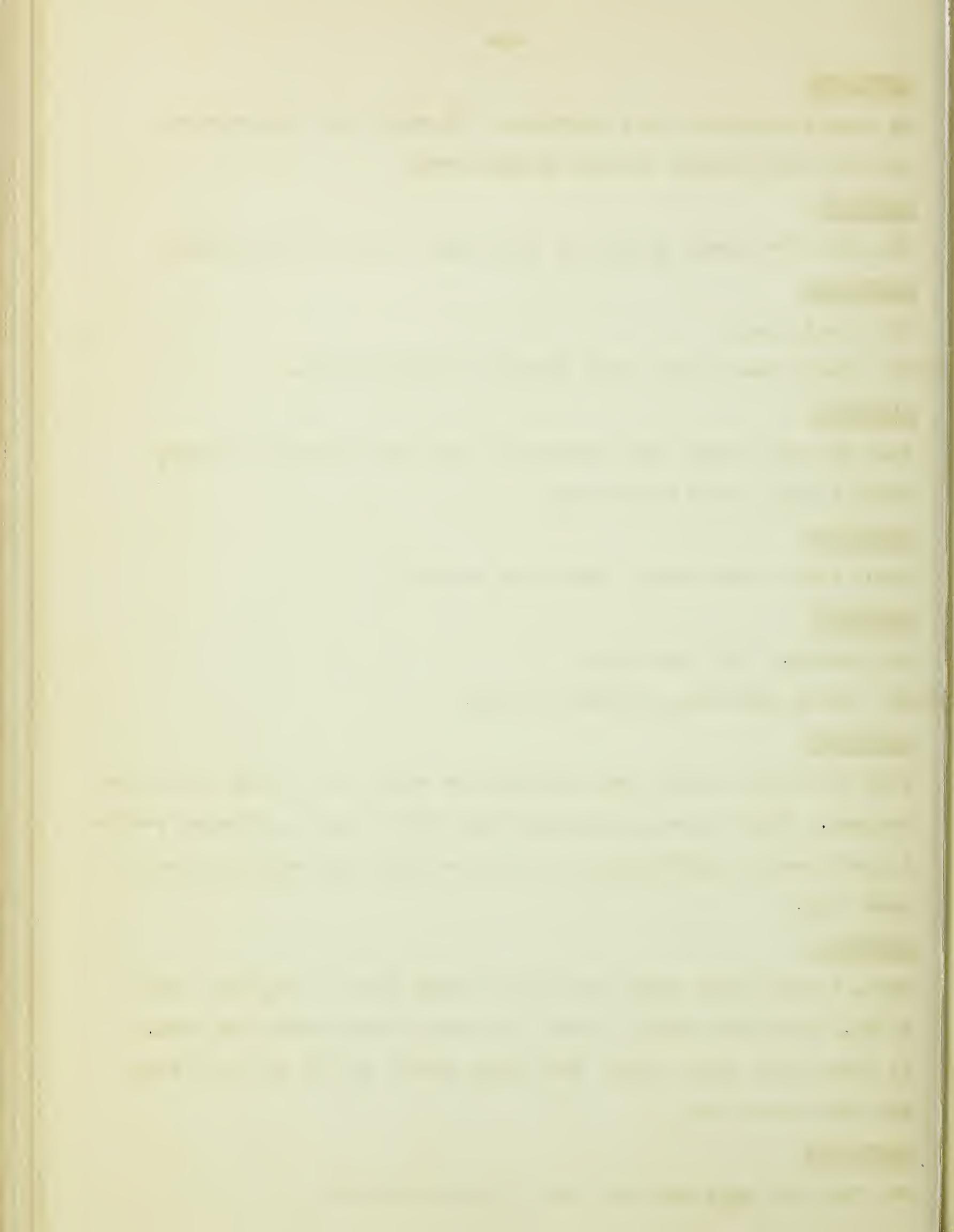
I'll tell you frankly, Mr. Lawrence, we want you to help us in our program. Your experience should help other farmers, because you're a good farmer, and I'm told that you've kept down wind erosion on your farm.

LAWRENCE

Well, I don't know about that good farmer part of it, but I try to be. One thing sure, I don't have any trouble with the sand. It makes good apple land. The thing you've got to do is to keep the blow spots out.

SACKRIDER

Oh, then you have had blow outs in your orchard?



LAWRENCE

Oh my, yes. One time I had three of them, two in the orchard and one in the truck garden. Guess they were two or three acres big.

SACKRIDER

You don't tell me! I suppose you stopped them with sod.

LAWRENCE

That was part of it. I knew that everything would be all right and I could get good crops if I could stop those blow outs. The first thing I did was to fertilize and marl the blow spots. Then I spread a mulch of ripe sweet clover over them. Then the seed shattered out, and the next spring I got a catch of sweet clover, and it's kept seeding ever since. This sandy land is good crop land...

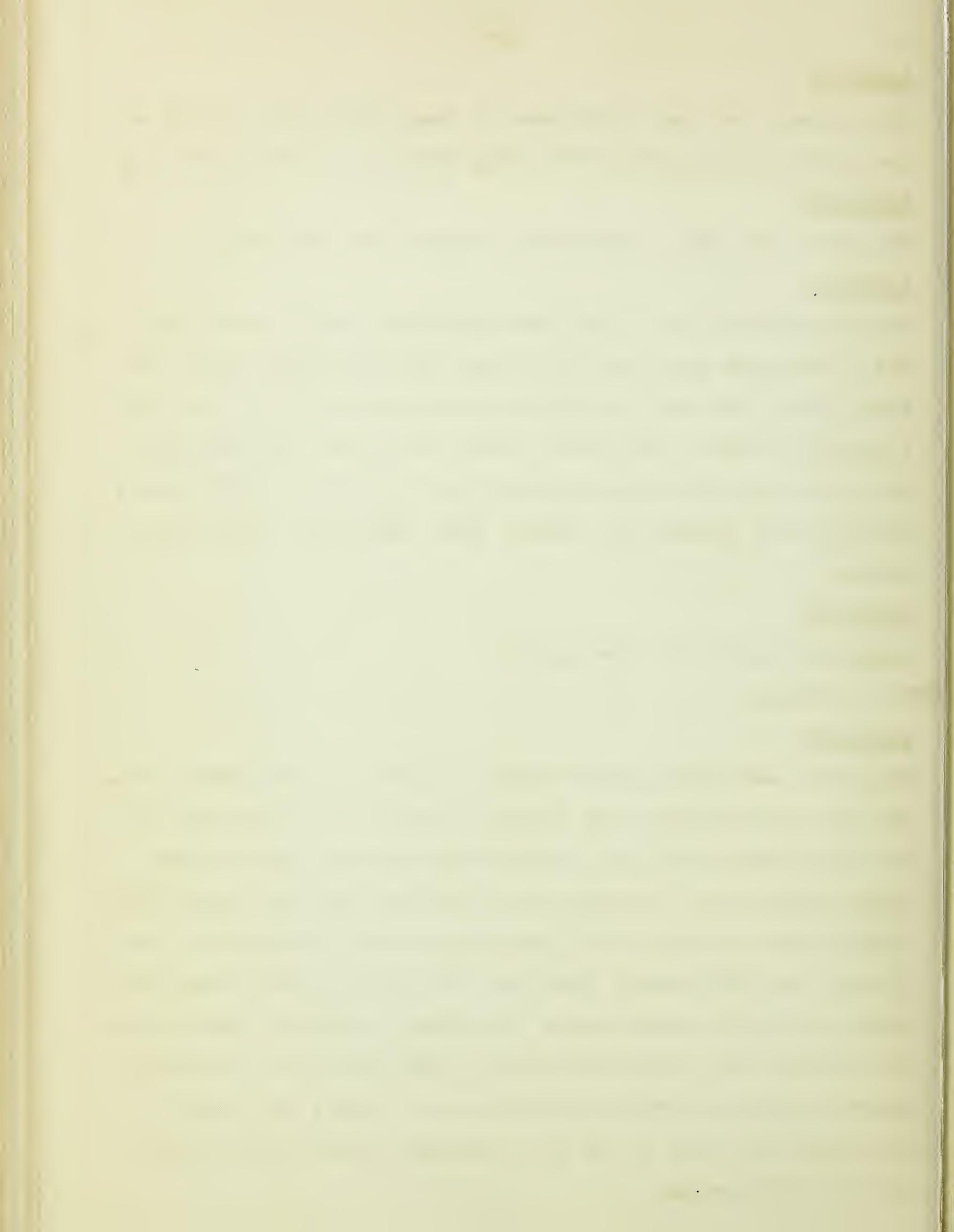
SACKRIDER

...if you control the blow spots!

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

Thus fruit and truck growers began to fight the wind erosion evil. But most significant of all erosion control work in Michigan is the establishment of a soil conservation district by the land-owners themselves. At Grand Haven the winds blow over Dewey Hill, a bald sandy mountain by the lakeside, carrying thousands of tons of sand into the harbor. More than two million dollars have been spent to keep the harbor open. Few farms in western Ottawa County are entirely free from "blow spots." When the state legislature passed a soil conservation districts law in 1937, the Ottawa Countians were quick to ask for a hearing. They met last March in the courthouse...



SOUND: Rapping for order...

COMMISSIONER

You have heard County Agent Arnold explain the purpose of this meeting. Some of the things to be decided are whether you need a soil conservation district and what the boundaries should be.

Now what other remarks?

EUGENE TEN BRINK

I live in Allendale Township. At least the west half of it should be reforested and I should like to have it included in this district. I am heartily in accord with this project.

M. SORENSEN

Mr. Chairman, I represent the Farmers' Union. I feel that this is a worth while proposition and the Union, also, feels the same way. In the northwestern part of Crockery Township, when I was a young man, there were many farmers living there. Where farmers grew fruit and harvested crops there is now practically nothing. Many of the farms are abandoned. This is more than an individual problem.

DE WITT

Mr. Commissioner. (Hubbub of noises)

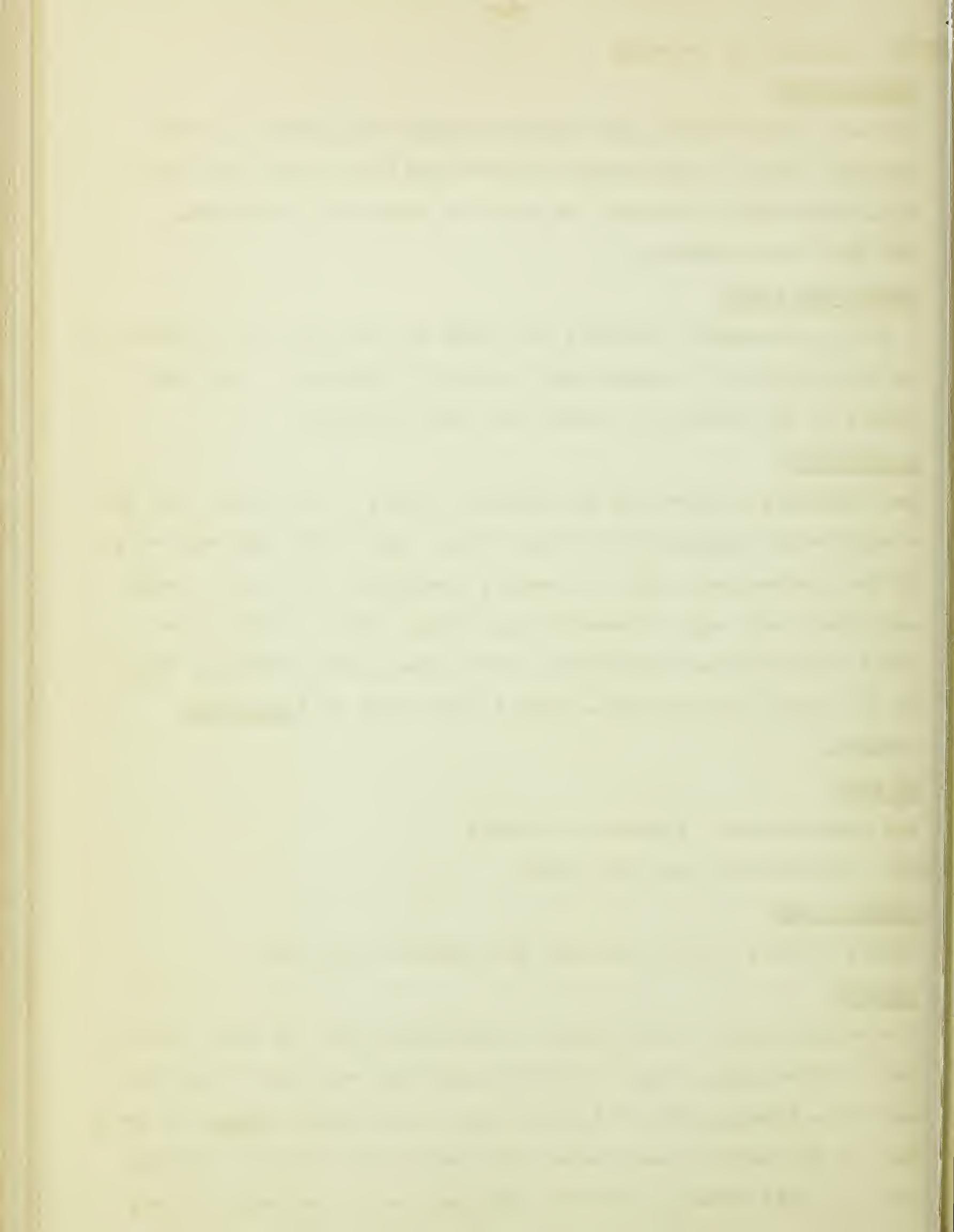
SOUND: Commissioner raps for order.

COMMISSIONER

Order! Order! Let's hear what Mr. DeWitt has to say.

DE WITT

I represent some of the farmers in this district. We have a great deal of blow sand. Some of us have done what we could to keep the sand from blowing, but it is more than we can handle alone. A great deal of the land is now covered and some of the roads are buried. In time, this blowing sand will ruin many acres now being farmed.



FRANK HENDRYCKS

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman.

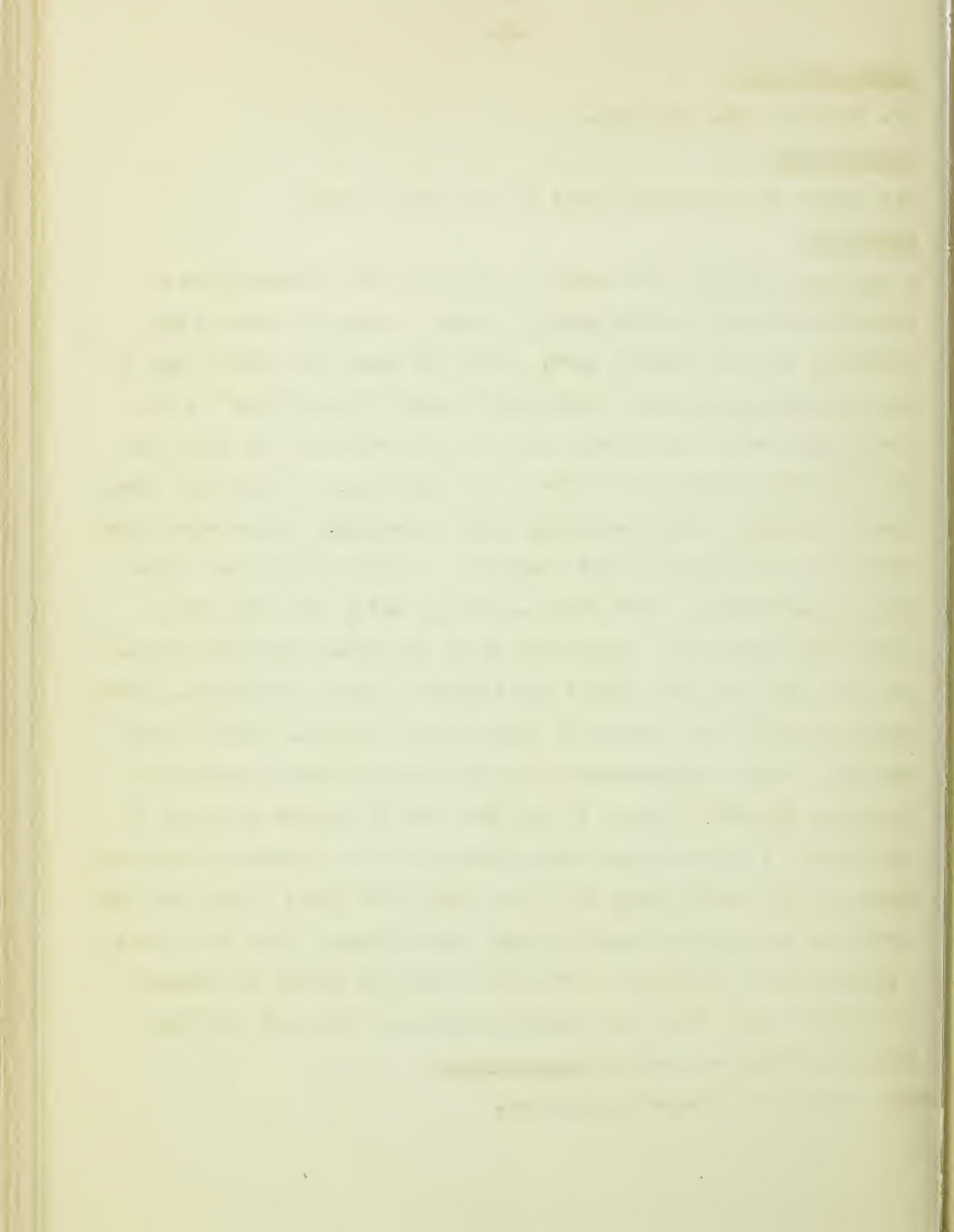
COMMISSIONER

All right, Mr. Hendrycks, what do you have to say?

HENDRYCKS

I just want to say a few words, to give you the picture from a supervisor's and township point of view. I have an area in my township, in the southern part. About 34 years ago when I came to this township there was a settlement called "Irish Town." I believe there were a good many acres in this section. At that time this district consisted of five or six sections. I have been down there a number of times watching their threshing. There were probably 18 or 19 farmers in this section. I will mention one township in particular, about three sections, and I will talk about these three sections. There were 18 or 19 farmers and they raised grain by the car load. Fruit was raised in large quantities. Today there are only five farmers in these three sections. When I took over the office of supervisor, the valuation of these three sections was \$33,500. Today, it has been cut to \$20,000 and that is very high. I am sure this spring there will be a further reduction. There are 600 acres going up for tax sale this year. There are 300 acres now held by the banks through foreclosures. This is too big a problem for a township or even the County of Ottawa to attempt to control and I think the Committee will see the need for this district. What we need is organization.

SOUND: Voices of agreement, applause.



ABE ANYS

I think I was the first one in the county to plant trees. I have planted thousands of them with good results. They will prevent blowing of sand.

SOUND: Hubbub of voices.

M. SORENSEN

You can get the same results with beachgrass. It stops the sand and I have made money growing it.

DIRECTOR HOFFMASTER

Mr. Chairman.

COMMISSIONER

All right, Director Hoffmaster, of the State Conservation Department. You have the floor.

HOFFMASTER

How many would be willing to plant trees on their land, on land not suitable for agricultural purposes? Will those who will plant trees stand up?

SOUND: Everybody standing, great confusion and noise, shouts.

COMMISSIONER

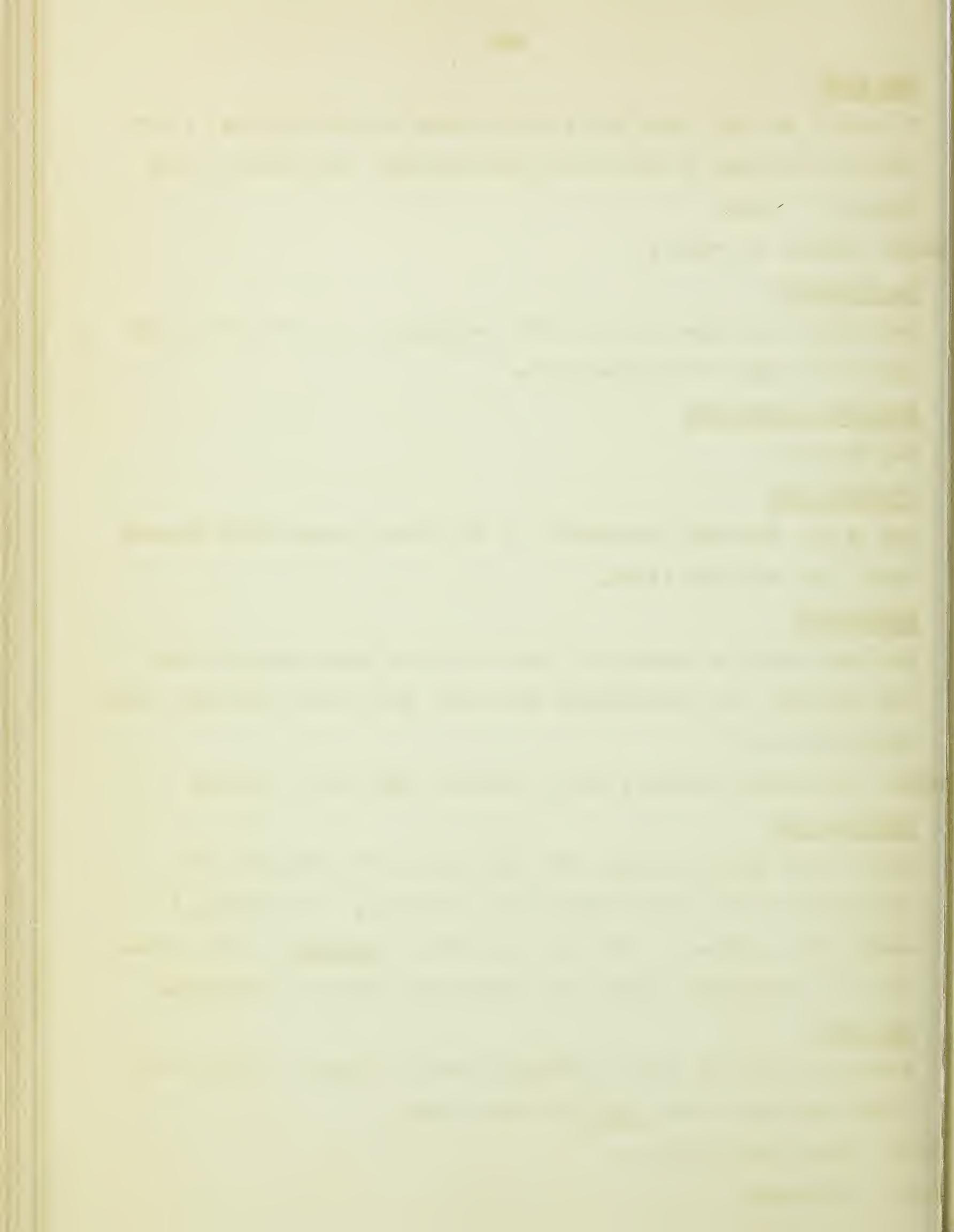
Well, thank you very much! You all seem to be strong for the establishment of a soil conservation district. Personally, I would like to know if there are any who are opposed to the formation of a district. There are always two sides to a question.

ABE ANYS

Mister, if you had lived in Ottawa County as long as some of us, you'd know that there ain't no other side.

SOUND: Cheers and laughter.

MUSIC: Fading...



ANNOUNCER

Residents of western Ottawa County voted upon the question of establishing a district. Of 811 landowners voting, only 9 cast their ballots against the district. Now, a new era in land use is under way.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

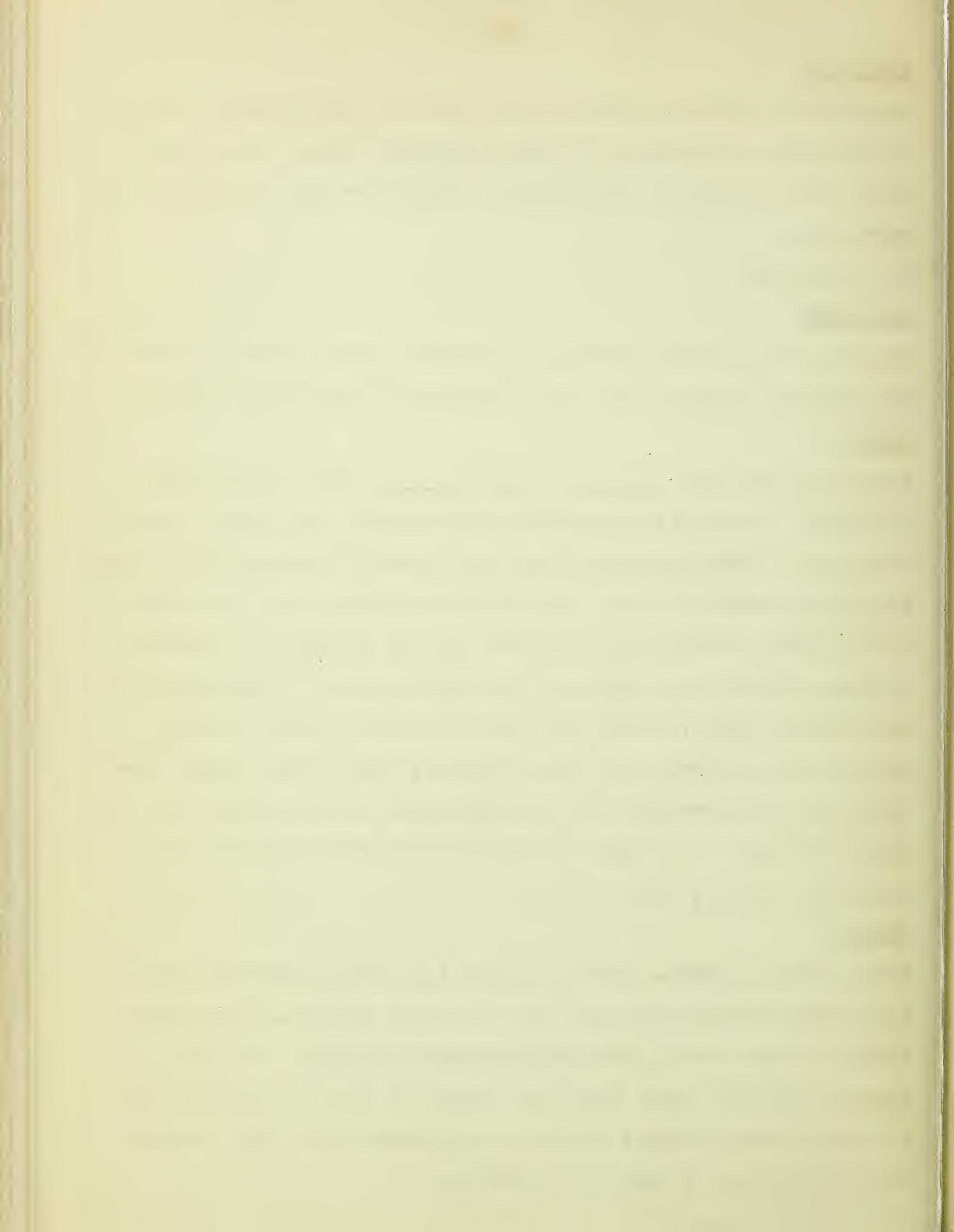
And now, here is Ewing Jones, your regular weekly spokesman from the regional office of the Soil Conservation Service, in Dayton.

JONES

Thank you very much, [redacted]. The formation of Michigan's first soil conservation district is, of course, a forward step. This community, like many others, is determined to solve its land wastage problems. Its residents believe they are moving in the right direction because they are all working in a united program. But now, carrying on the regular order of business, let me introduce Gus A. Thorpe, who is now project manager of the demonstration project near Benton Harbor. The Ottawa County district will rely heavily upon the experience of the project at Benton Harbor, so we ought to find out just what that experience has been. Please, Gus.

THORPE

Wait a minute, Ewing, that's a mighty big order. Remember that we've been working with both wind and water erosion. We've been working on more than 7,000 acres in Berrien County. We have a separate plan for each farm, as a matter of fact, a separate plan for each field. I don't think we can go into all of the erosion control measures in just a few minutes.



JONES

Naturally not, but suppose you just give us some of the highlights of the wind erosion control measures--in other words, some of the practices that will help out the folks up in Ottawa County.

THORPE

That's still a big order, but maybe I can give you some of the highlights.

JONES

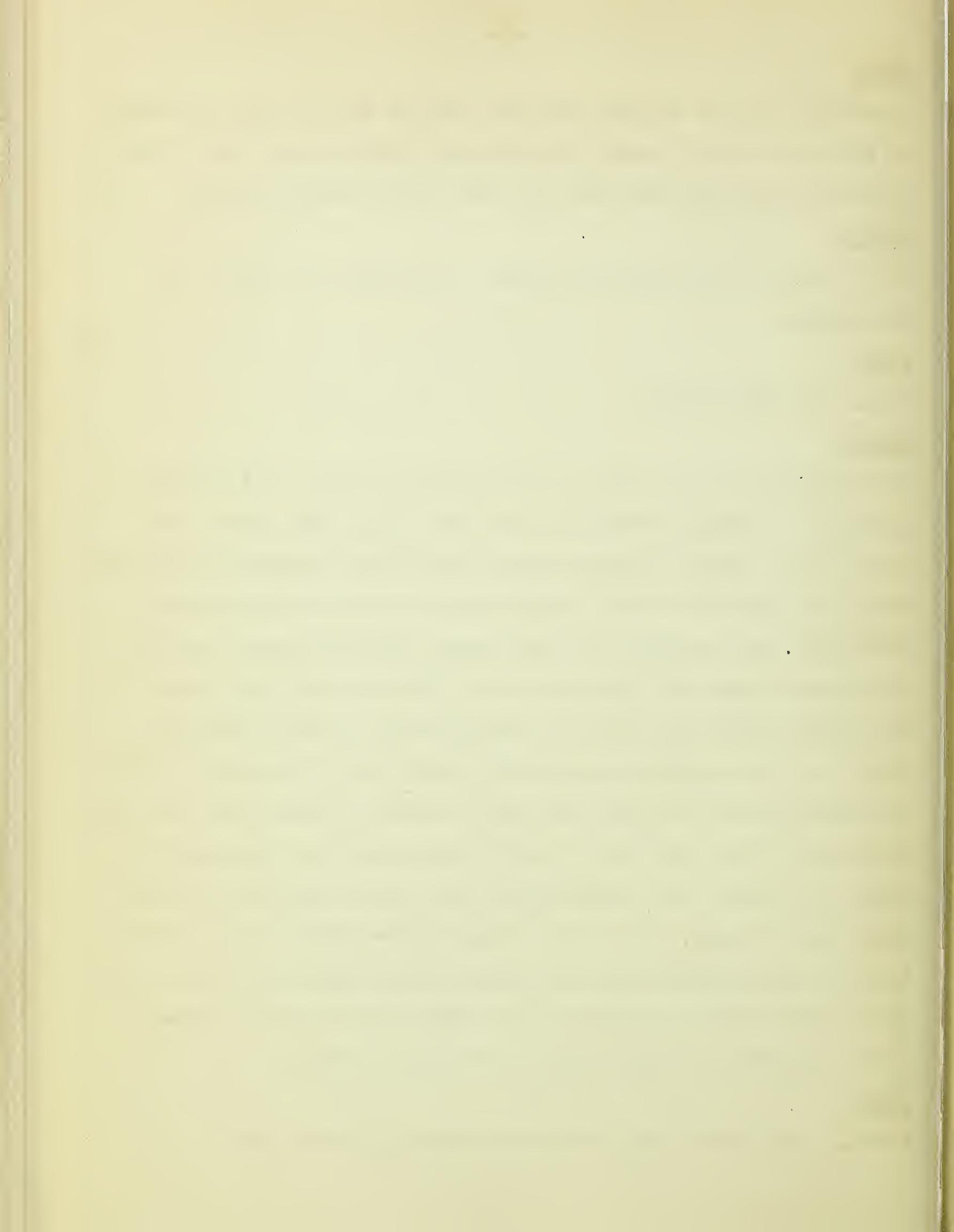
Good. Go right ahead.

THORPE

Reforestation is, of course, one of the big items. We've had a good deal of success with the pines, red pine, white pine, and scotch pine. Areas of blow-sand or so-called "blow-outs" have been stabilized against further damage from wind erosion by planting seedlings, then mulching the bare areas. Old fruit-tree prunings and limbs trimmed off trees cut in the farm woodlot were used. This brush keeps the sand from blowing while natural vegetation comes in, such as grasses and weeds, which aid in closing the area to blowing until the trees are large enough to control the erosion. Windbreaks of two and three rows of trees have been planted on a number of farms. For windbreaks we used Norway spruce, Austrian pine, and red pine. On several farms narrow strips of one rod or less of tall-growing vegetation such as rye, sorghum and corn have been established on planted areas. Some cooperators are using field stripping of truck areas for the same purpose.

JONES

I see. And you've found rotations helpful, haven't you?



THORPE

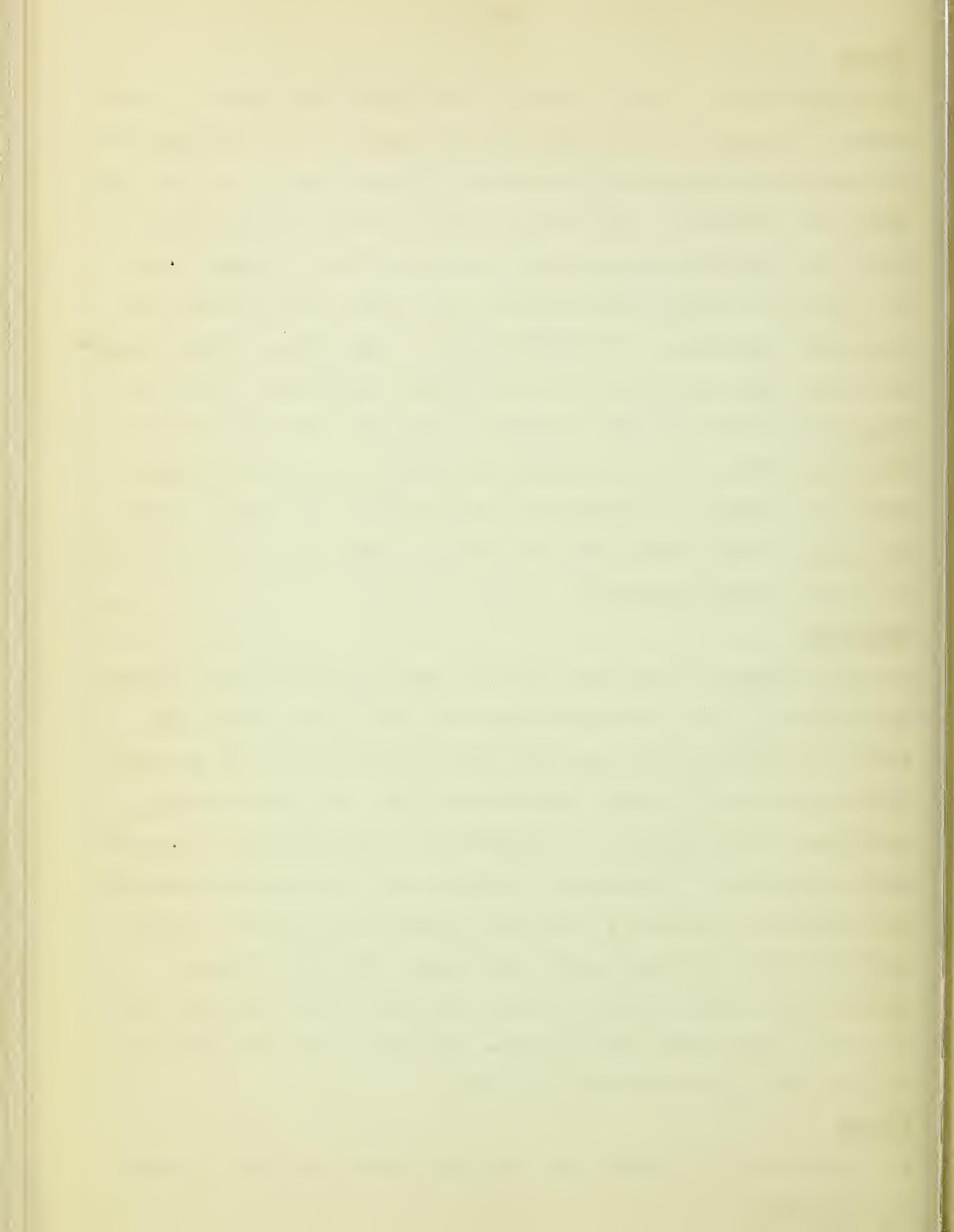
Exceptionally so. Sweet clover in truck rotations serves two purposes. It keeps the wind away from the surface of the ground, and it assists in maintaining the supply of organic matter in the soil. There are a number of other wind erosion control measures that we have found satisfactory, such as the utilization of grasses that are adapted to sandy soils, marling and liming, fertilizing, and some strip cropping. It all boils down to one thing, Ewing: proper land use. But now, let me introduce Frank Hendrycks. Frank was one of the leaders in the formation of the new soil conservation district. He's one of the supervisors elected by the farmers, so he'll be a leader in carrying out the plans of the group. Frank is a big, genial fellow, and his spirit is typical of those farmers up there. Frank Hendrycks.

HENDRYCKS

Now, Mr. Thorpe, I don't have much to say. I do know that we have been trying to stop these shifting sands for a long time. The county realized several years ago that this was more than an individual problem. It needed community effort. The county has, annually, for the past four years, made an appropriation to develop county nurseries of beachgrass and trees and to make them available to individual landowners. Separate townships have also provided funds for wind erosion control plantings. This fine work has accomplished a great deal in making planting stocks available and has been a very worth while effort. But the problem has remained serious, and has become worse in fact.

THORPE

As I understand it, Frank, the sand has injured the city as well as the farms.



HENDRYCKS

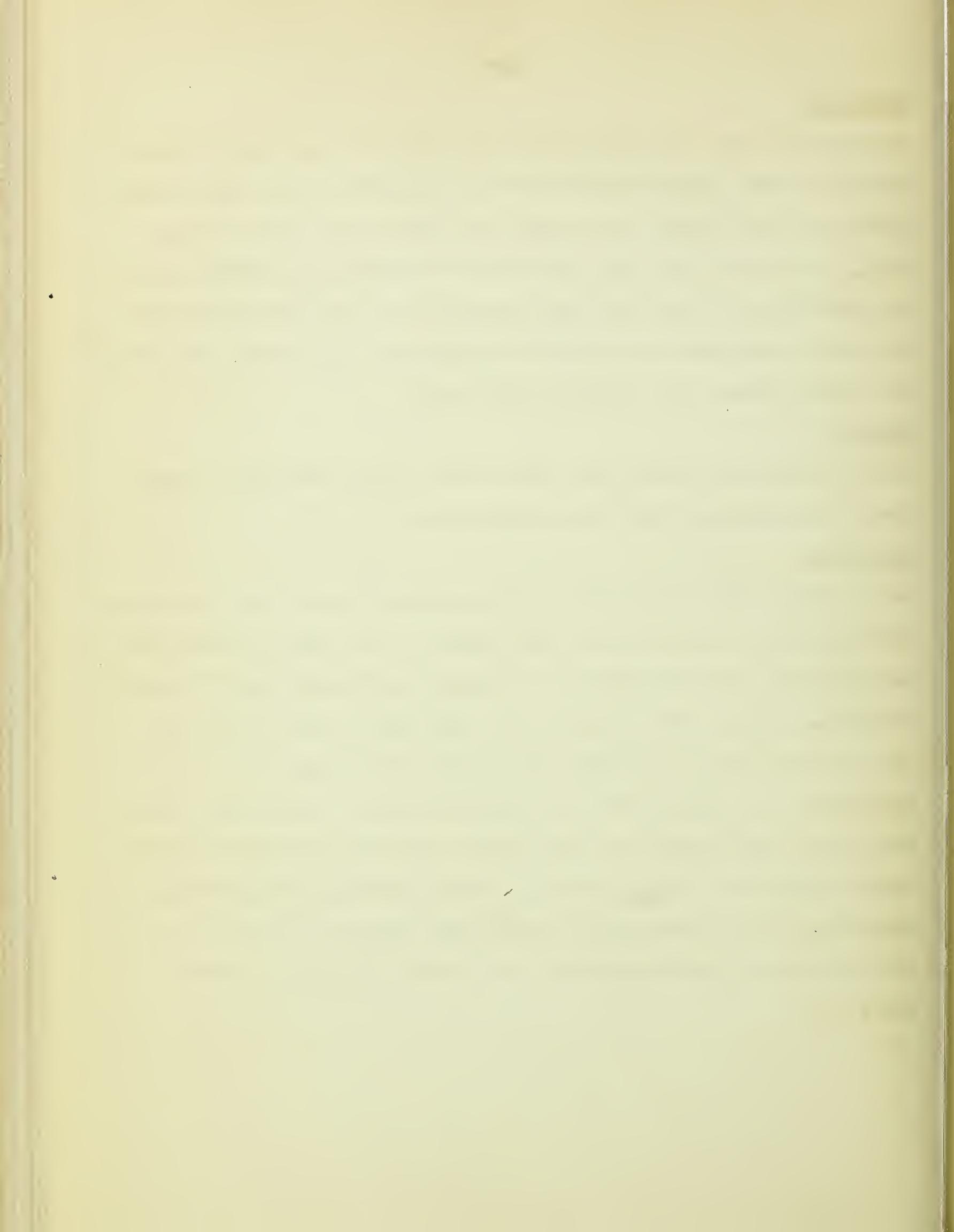
It certainly has. Of course, the prosperity of any city is dependent on the agricultural sections surrounding it. Many people living on these farms are looking for jobs in the city because their farms have gone bad. The resort business near Grand Haven is suffering. It has been very expensive for the road commission to remove sand every spring and to maintain road fences. The city and county drains are clogging with sand.

THORPE

Frank, coming down here, you told me what Riley West had to say about the problem. Won't you repeat that?

HENDRYCKS

Sure. Riley West lives north of West Olive. Here's what he says. "All that's the matter is we have taken off too much of the woods and given the wind too much of a sweep. Everybody's got to work together. If the other fellow will take care of his, I'll take care of mine. But it doesn't do me any good to take care of my land when my neighbor won't take care of his." That's what Riley West said. And here's my final word: wind erosion can become a serious problem. It has become a serious problem along western Michigan. But Ottawa County farmers have banded together, and they're going to work together for a better land and a better life.



JONES

Thank you very much, Frank Hendrycks. The eyes of Michigan are upon your soil conservation district, and good luck to you. And thank you, Gus Thorpe of Benton Harbor, Michigan. And now,

_____, before I turn the show back to you, let me say that a bulletin on "Soil Conservation Districts" has just been published. Copies of the bulletin, "Soil Conservation Districts," and copies of the "Basic Provisions of the Michigan Soil Conservation Districts Law" may be secured by writing to "Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio." Twenty-six states have passed laws permitting farmers to organize these districts. And because of the community action encouraged by the district approach, we can now look for increased soil conservation progress in these states. Only by working together can we hope to control erosion effectively, and preserve the soil--for ourselves--and for generations to come.

MUSIC: Fading...

ANNOUNCER

If you would like a copy of the bulletin "Soil Conservation Districts," drop a postcard to Soil Conservation, Dayton, Ohio. Next week, the story of terracing...

SOUND: Thunder, followed by rain.

ANNOUNCER

This is an educational presentation of the Nation's Station.

